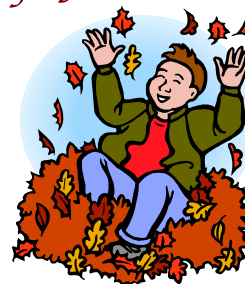


South Carolina's Current Developments



Enjoy the Season.



Home of the first soil conservation district plan...February 4, 1938

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

November/December 2004

From the Office of the
State Conservationist

Walter W. Douglas



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Dear South Carolina Conservation Family,

As the holiday season approaches and 2004 comes to a close, I reflect on the past year with pride for what has been accomplished.

South Carolina NRCS was chosen as a pilot state for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). With nearly impossible deadlines and huge workloads, our field and state office staff stepped up to the plate. When it was all over, it was clear that we hit a homerun. Thanks to those involved for your dedication, perseverance, and willingness to lead the way with this new program.

Several weeks ago we learned that CSP 2005 will include three South Carolina watersheds, encompassing 16 counties. Staff from these counties will receive training and more information on what to expect on December 15th, in Santee.

It is important to remember that CSP will eventually make its way into your watershed in the near future, so it's best to be prepared. Learn what you can about the program. And most importantly, prepare the landowners in your area by ensuring they will be eligible. Two key factors to emphasize are residue management and soil testing. Do your part to educate the landowners so they will have a better chance of getting rewarded for their conservation efforts. It's critical that farmers are ready for CSP when their watershed is selected, because it may be another 8-10 years before they have another opportunity.

I am also pleased with the implementation of our other Farm Bill programs. Because of your efforts, and the dedicated assistance and support from our conservation partners, wetlands were restored, cropland protected, wildlife habitat created, and water quality improved.

You have all set a very high standard for South Carolina NRCS through your exemplary efforts this year. With the early allocation of Farm Bill funds, I have no doubt that 2005 will also be a success.

photo by Lisa Good, Laurens NRCS

Notes from the Field

NRCS Partners with SC Army National Guard to Implement Conservation on Training Area

by Sabrenna Bennett, Public Affairs Assistant

As a soldier, training is a daily, continuous process, designed to instill the survival skills needed on the battlefield. Because of constant use of roads and fields, as well as pressure from natural elements, significant damage to the environment at an army base can result. For this reason, NRCS and the SC Army National Guard (SCARNG) formed a conservation partnership through a cooperative agreement. Bryan Hall, SCARNG conservation manager, directs the environmental program utilizing conservation practices to remediate erosion and other natural resource concerns, ultimately resulting in improved training areas on the facility. With NRCS technical assistance from Design Engineer Eric Fleming, Conservation Agronomist Gene Hardee and Urban Conservationist Jim Wilson, the SCARNG has installed erosion control practices, storm water management practices and training area improvement practices (such as tank turn pads on well-used roads). "NRCS has become a cornerstone in our soil stabilization program," stated Hall. "They provide us with technical expertise from initial site identification and design to final remediation and follow up monitoring. Without NRCS our program would not be at the level it is today."

The partnership began in the fall of 1998 with the installation of conservation practices exceeding \$750,000. The installed practices meet NRCS specifications and are tailored specifically for these projects. They have been funded under the Integrated Training Area Management

(ITAM) and the Environment (ENV) Programs of the Department of Defense. ITAM relates to training area improvement, such as the installation of turn pads, while the ENV program addresses erosion control, water quality, and natural resource issues, such as threatened and endangered species habitat.

The overall size of the SCARNG McCrady Training Center is around 15,000 acres, and 5,000 of those acres have been planned for conservation practices. There are approximately 110 miles of

dirt roads needing attention because of erosion, (in addition to other eroded training areas) resulting in the facility spending approximately \$100,000 a year on erosion control.

One of the erosion control projects NRCS has assisted with on the facility involved a 12-foot deep gully, which was repaired for use as a nature trail. To combat the erosion, a pipe-drop

structure was installed with a grassed waterway and a rock riprap chute. Additionally, slope drains were installed on an adjacent slope, helping to prevent further damage. These devices consisted of a surface inlet connected to a pipe that drained runoff water to the bottom of the hill, rather than allowing water to run downhill, potentially causing more erosion damage. A specially developed seed mixture was also planted throughout the remediated gully site and along the nature trail to slow down runoff water and prevent further erosion. "The extensive erosion caused by uncontrolled water and soldier training impacts the ecosystem with sediment and poor water quality," stated Wilson. "In partnership with NRCS, the National Guard has developed an erosion plan to correct the problem that affects water quality. This in turn serves the purpose of soldier training."

Other areas of accelerated erosion are the firebreaks that are located every one tenth of a mile.



Erosion site before conservation practices were installed.



Erosion site after conservation practices were installed.

On the repaired areas, the firebreaks have been shaped and seeded to control the erosion problems.

While erosion is important, it isn't the only problem plaguing the training site. Storm water management is also a priority. Excessive runoff water from disturbed areas can lead to several problems, including sediment deposits in wetland areas. For this reason, a large sediment basin was installed downstream of an intensely used training area. The basin acts as a filter, purifying the water by removing sediment, thus enhancing water quality. Below the basin, runoff water continues on its natural pattern through the watershed. "The sediment basin is essential because it is protecting the streams and associated wetlands from the negative impacts of military training," stated Fleming. Gene Hardee's specially developed seed mix was utilized on this site as well. The mix includes native warm season grasses (such as little bluestem) to stabilize the site and provide the additional benefit of enhanced wildlife habitat.

In addition to conservation practices, the National Guard also installed six tank turn pads to improve roads frequently used by military tanks. The large, fast moving tanks damaged the roads by making deep ruts in the intersections as they turned the vehicles, leading to erosion and encroachment into adjacent threatened and endangered species habitat areas. This problem was addressed by installing thirty-foot wide concrete turn pads in the curves, which prevents the wearing away of the soil by tanks.

In the future, NRCS and the National Guard plan to continue their partnership by establishing additional conservation practices. Just as military training is a continuous, on-going process, the protection and conservation of natural resources must also be on-going to ensure training areas can support future activities.

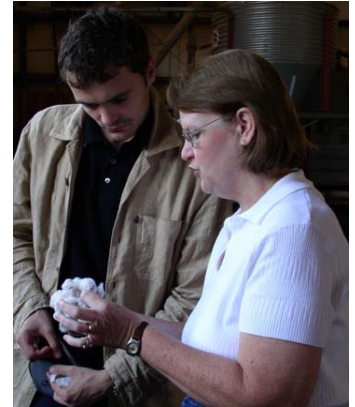
European Visitors Tour Farms in York County

by Sabrenna Bennett, Public Affairs Assistant

On Monday, November 1, 2004, NRCS District Conservationist Maryann Trent hosted a tour of local farms for a group of European visitors in York County. The group consisted of journalists, political party representatives and government ministry representatives participating in a program titled "European Foreign Policy Challenges" through the International Visitors Program, a program of the U.S. State Department.

Members of the party included *Political Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Conservative Party of Norway, Cabinet Chief to the President of Montenegro, Desk Officer of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovak Republic, Journalist of the Corriere del Ticino in Bern and Head of European Policy and Coordination Branch, Regeneration and External Affairs Division, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.*

Trent led the group on a tour of a cotton farm, owned by Dean Boyd, as well as a cattle farm, owned by C.W. Senn. Both farmers met with the visitors and discussed topics relevant to their operations. Boyd, who farms 800



Maryann Trent, York County district conservationist (right) discusses cotton crops with a European visitor.

acres of cotton, discussed commodity crops, the fluctuation of national and global markets, and the profits earned by growing cotton.

Senn owns about 150 acres of land, where he raises 50-60 brood cows. During the tour, Senn answered questions concerning animal health issues, mad cow disease, government sanctions and laws concerning livestock and food supply safety.

They also explained the conservation practices on their farms and emphasized their importance. Boyd practices contour farming, no-till, and residue management, while Senn utilizes cross-fencing, riparian buffers and water troughs. Both farmers stressed the importance of protecting their farms, livestock and natural resources.

"I think it is important for European visitors to receive first-hand information from our farmers," said Trent. "Farming has become a global market, and South Carolina farmers are dedicated and committed to producing food and products for all of us."

For more information, please contact the York field office at (803) 684-3137.

SC NRCS Showcases Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Practices in Darlington County

by Amy O. Maxwell, USDA-NRCS, Public Affairs Specialist

In Darlington County, South Carolina, numerous wildlife species are getting first-class treatment at Clemson University's Pee Dee Research and Education Center. The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is providing financial and technical assistance to establish habitat enhancements as demonstration and research sites. The project is a collaboration of efforts by numerous local, state, and federal agencies to illustrate integrated land management for wildlife, agriculture, and forestry in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. The project will target a wide audience, including farmers and landowners, as well as school children and the general public.

Pee Dee Research and Education Center Director George Askew spearheaded the project when he called a meeting of various agencies to discuss establishment of a wildlife habitat demonstration site. "We set out to show the economic and environmental value of wildlife beneficial practices and how they can be incorporated into existing farming practices," he explained. "The idea that supporting and maintaining wildlife alongside farming practices has not been widely accepted by many farmers because they did not understand the vast benefits of it, particularly the immediate advantages to their operations." Establishment of wildlife habitat practices naturally increases wildlife populations, which may allow farmers to lease their land for hunting and add economic value to their operations. "This project is a big step in changing some negative ideas about providing food and shelter for wildlife alongside farming practices," said Askew.

"This project is a big step in changing some negative ideas about providing food and shelter for wildlife alongside farming practices."

-Pee Dee Research and Education Center Director George Askew



Project coordinators from the research center and NRCS conservationists survey wildlife plantings.

The project was implemented through WHIP, which helps landowners develop habitat for upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other wildlife in South Carolina. The bobwhite quail, wintering waterfowl and shorebird habitat, and threatened and endangered plant and animal species have been identified as the "priority conservation concern" in the state. WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. The program offers both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP agreements between NRCS and participants generally last from 5 to 10 years from the date the agreement is signed. This project between NRCS and the Center is contracted for 5 years.

NRCS Wildlife Biologist Jim Lewis said that he hopes to add to the initial \$50,000 of funding the Center received to begin the project. The Clemson University Board of Directors also showed their support for the project by putting additional funds into the project, allowing them to hire a full-time wildlife biologist to coordinate the initiative. T.J. Savereno provides on-the-ground oversight of the project, assisting Clemson PhD. Candidate Laura Knipp. The research is serving as Knipp's dissertation project. Together, they are managing the WHIP project on a day-to-day basis and will observe the practices over the length of the 5-year contract. Greg Yarrow, Clemson Professor of Wildlife, was responsible for writing up the proposal to fund the WHIP project, as well as securing the assistance of Knipp, which is being funded by the Wildlife Habitat Management Institute (WHMI).

Lewis emphasized the importance of this project in educating both land users and the general public. "It's one thing to tell people about wildlife habitat enhancement, but when you can

actually show them the practice on the land, and show them the benefits first-hand—that's where the real impact happens." NRCS conservationists Wayne Cowell and John Bennett of Darlington County were also instrumental in helping to plan and implement the project, which began last January.

The project consists of illustrating and evaluating WHIP and other USDA conservation practices for wildlife including agricultural filter strips, hedgerow plantings, field borders, native warm season grasses, forest stand improvements, forest openings, riparian forest buffers, and prescribed burning. Field borders are particularly beneficial to wildlife because they promote vegetation that harbors insect species eaten by wildlife, provide seed and soft mast that also serve as food sources, and provide important escape and nesting cover. They can also cut-down on populations of harmful insects which can affect crop productivity by increasing their natural predators. Additional work in the future will also include enhancing wetland areas for wildlife.

Project highlights also include establishing new and expanding existing hedgerows by planting a variety of native hardwood species and shrubs. The hedgerows and field borders, along with filter strips and riparian buffers, provide multiple benefits including food and shelter for wildlife, but they also help filter out harmful pollutants that may run off from crops and other agricultural uses. The project is enhanced by signage which explains to viewers the purpose of each practice area.

As part of the project, Savereno and Knipp will evaluate the effectiveness of the WHIP prescribed practices and their specifications. "We will be able to look at the results, such as increase of certain wildlife species, to see what's working and what can be improved," explained Knipp. The results will be compiled at the end of the WHIP contract and submitted to NRCS as suggestions for fine tuning the program.

Lewis added, "This project is a great way to begin changing the mindset of many farmers when it comes to integrating farming practices with wildlife habitat." The demonstration site will also be used to train USDA agency personnel. "I think when the five year contract is completed, and the plantings and practices have really been established, it will be a great teaching tool for a wide audience."

For more information, contact the center at (843) 662-3526, ext. 250.

New Florence USDA Service Center Opens

The United States Department of Agriculture had a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the new Florence USDA Service Center on Wednesday, September 15, 2004. The 9,958-square foot building is the new home of the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development (RD) and the Florence Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

While each agency is different, they are all committed to providing both technical and financial services to rural communities, farmers and land-owners. The new location allows the agencies closer contact, making it easier to work together, as well as to reach clients seeking assistance. The service center also offers its 42 employees more space and easier building access, and is more equipped for technology than their previous location at the federal building. "We are thrilled that our employees and local customers will benefit from this outstanding new facility in Florence County," said Walter W. Douglas, NRCS State Conservationist.

Speakers at the ribbon cutting included USDA agency heads, as well as representatives from Congressman James Clyburn's office and US Senator Lindsey Graham's office.

The program concluded with a tour of the facility. The building is located at 215 Third Loop Road. For more information, call (843) 669-9686.



USDA agency officials, including NRCS' James Williams (second from right), and local government officials celebrate the opening of the Florence Service Center.

CSP Pilot Program in South Carolina— One Landowners Perspective

Alfalfa Producer Rewarded for Conservation Excellence

*By Amy O. Maxwell, USDA-NRCS, Public Affairs
Specialist*

Tucked away in the middle of a gorgeous, gently sloping landscape is Linda Sexton's home and alfalfa hay operation. Located in Kinards, South Carolina, and straddling the county lines of Laurens and Newberry Counties, the Sexton farm is a great example of the benefits of conservation. The exemplary operation is also one of the nation's first 2,220 farms to be enrolled in the Conservation Security Program (CSP). The program was unveiled this past spring when USDA Secretary Ann Veneman announced the first watersheds selected for implementation of CSP. In South Carolina, the Saluda River Watershed was chosen. NRCS administers this voluntary conservation program that provides payments for producers who have historically practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and offers incentives for those who want to do more. "This particular farm is truly an example of the CSP motto, which is *reward the best and motivate the rest*," explained NRCS District Conservationist Lisa Good of Laurens County.

Good began working with Sexton last year, and Newberry NRCS District Conservationist Craig O'Dell has been working with her for many years. Before she became officially established as an alfalfa farmer, Sexton and her husband experimented with several areas of agriculture beginning in 1970. "My husband and I returned to this area after Vietnam and we experimented with a hog operation, as well as growing small grains." Finally, Sexton took it on her own accord to establish an alfalfa hay operation, and supplies a single buyer. "We have just over 400 acres of alfalfa that we grow for hay."

Alfalfa is highly nutritious forage—higher in protein, energy and many minerals than most other roughage feeds. It has a very long history, and is known as one of the earliest crops domesticated by man. Research indicates that remains of alfalfa more than 6,000 years old have been found in Iran, while the

oldest reference is from Turkey in 1300 BC! Growers of the legume praise it for its high yield, wide adaptation, disease resistance, and feeding quality. The United States grows about 23 million acres a year—third in value behind only corn and soybeans.

Once established, alfalfa requires careful management practices to ensure high yields and stand persistence. For example, timely cutting at the proper growth stage; control of insects, diseases and weeds; and replacement of nutrients removed in the forage. "Alfalfa has excellent forage quality if managed properly, and Mrs. Sexton has done her homework on the subject," said Good. The seed type Sexton grows is Amerifeaf 721.

"Alfalfa production used to be a bigger industry in South Carolina in the 1950's and 60's, and it was often used in crop rotations," explained O'Dell. "It is the forage of choice for dairy cattle and horses." However, because it can be expensive to establish, especially in small quantities, and because it is tedious to manage, it takes a producer who has a need for high quality forage and is willing

to invest time into the crop. South Carolina's climate also creates some problems in the harvesting of alfalfa. Therefore, it is not as common to find a landowner in South Carolina today who is committed to producing alfalfa. "Growing alfalfa for hay is not something you can just establish and watch it grow. It takes continual management, plenty of time and patience, and a creative approach."

Sexton was already practicing intensive nutrient and pest management, both which are critical to establishing a hearty alfalfa crop. Her acreage qualified as Tier 2, meaning she had addressed soil and water quality to the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) standards on her entire operation. National statistics show that 40 percent of this round of CSP applicants qualified for Tier 2 contracts. Her contract was based on the conservation practice of forage harvest management, or specifically, cutting grass for hay. Furthermore, Sexton was going above and beyond in her stewardship activities, including collection of yield data, controlling noxious/invasive weeds, and testing her soil on a regular basis.



Linda Sexton (right) of Kinards, SC, worked with NRCS District Conservationist Lisa Good to enroll her alfalfa operation into CSP.

"I received the direct mailing from the NRCS office regarding the kickoff of CSP in South Carolina and contacted the office to find out more," Sexton said. "Because I found a market for the alfalfa, it has really been a rewarding experience, and hopefully will continue to be so," she said. With a 10-year CSP contract, Sexton is realizing that her conservation efforts were definitely worthwhile. "This is a wonderful program to encourage producers to do all that they can to protect our natural resources, and now they will get rewarded for what many farm families have been doing for generations."



Once established, alfalfa requires careful management to ensure high yields and stand persistence.

2005 SC CSP Watersheds Announced

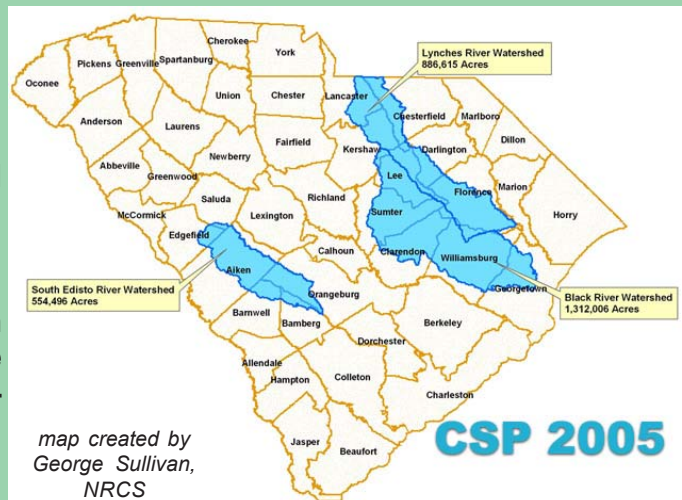
Three South Carolina Watersheds Included in Historic Expansion of National Conservation Security Program (CSP)

Columbia, SC, Nov. 5, 2004—Three South Carolina watersheds were among more than 200 across the nation invited to participate in a historic new program designed to reward farmers for long-term stewardship.

U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced the selected watersheds and said that sign-ups for the 2005 Conservation Security Program (CSP) would begin this winter.

In 2005, producers in the Black, Lynches, and South Fork Edisto River watersheds will be invited to apply. These watershed areas include parts of 16 counties including: Edgefield, Aiken, Saluda, Barnwell, Bamberg, Orangeburg, Lancaster, Chesterfield, Kershaw, Darlington, Lee, Sumter, Florence, Clarendon, Williamsburg, and Georgetown. Total acreage included in the designated watershed areas is over 2.7 million.

For more information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp or call Glenn Sandifer at (803) 253-3894.



CSP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands.

Edgefield Forester “WHIP’s” Land into Shape

by Sabrenna Bennett, Public Affairs Assistant

When someone makes their living consulting others as a certified forester, there probably isn't much about forestland and the importance of wildlife that they don't already know. However, that shouldn't stop them from practicing what they preach, and such is the case with Brad Thompson of Greenwood, SC.

Thompson enrolled 700 acres of forestland into the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), receiving technical assistance from NRCS District Conservationist Bob Bowie in Edgefield. Through WHIP, he was able to manage his lands through conservation practices designed to allow healthy timber growth, while enabling wildlife to thrive.

The primary timber on Thompson's land is loblolly pine, and the process of forestland management has proven to be demanding. Once land is cleared, trees are planted and then monitored to ensure that grass and brush growth is moderate and does not harm the trees. On average, 622 trees are planted per acre; however less may be planted when wildlife is taken into consideration. Tree thinning occurs about 15 years after initial tree planting, and the average life span of a loblolly is 35 years.

While protection of timber is a major concern, providing for wildlife habitat is also a priority. Establishment of conservation practices by Thompson ensured that habitat was protected. One such practice is prescribed burning. This practice is done in a check-board pattern, in which burning occurs one plot at a time, and benefits the trees by killing brush and shrubs on the forest floor, allowing more room for growth and direct access to sunlight. Burning also encourages the growth of native plants and legumes, an important food source for wildlife.

In addition to burning, hedgerows, tree shelters and food plots were installed to attract wildlife. The plots were planted with species that are known to attract wildlife, especially Bobwhite quail. They include lespedeza, clover, millet and Egyptian wheat. This abundant food source was a welcome sight for the many turkey, deer, rabbit and other wildlife found roaming throughout the forestland.

In addition to prescribed burning, hedgerows, tree shelters and food plots can enhance wildlife habitat in forested land.

Thompson's dedication to wildlife goes beyond WHIP. He is also a participant of the POWER (Protecting Our Wildlife at Every Right of Way) for Wildlife program. “I don't know exactly why I put so much effort into these conservation practices, except that I love wildlife and want to protect them at every turn,” stated Thompson. Through the POWER program, he has converted power rights-of-way into a haven for wildlife by encouraging the growth of native plants and other food sources.

“Thompson has really proven to be a dedicated forester and conservationist,” stated Bowie. “Through his actions, he strives to protect both wildlife and natural resources.”

As for the future, Thompson is currently preparing part of his land for planting of 80 acres of longleaf pines.

For more information, contact the Edgefield field office at (803) 637-3220.



NRCS District Conservationist Bob Bowie (left) and landowner Brad Thompson discuss wildlife habitat conservation practices.



Thompson planted Longleaf and Loblolly pines and established conservation practices, such as prescribed burning, to enhance wildlife habitat.

Hunter Creates Handicapped Accessible Hunt Club in Bamberg County

By Wayne Henderson, SC Disabilities Emphasis Program Manager (DEPM)



Man with a mission: Mike Beck accomplished his mission to provide a safe, accessible hunt club for hunting enthusiasts with disabilities.

October was National Disabilities Awareness Month, as well as the beginning of deer season. That's where Mike Beck comes into this story. Beck was an avid deer hunter for most of his life, until his life was forever changed in 1989. While serving as a corporal in the US Army, he lost his left

leg and was paralyzed. He spent the next two and a half years in and out of hospitals and in a deep depression. In 1992, a good friend convinced him to get back into deer hunting. Beck, his friend, and his brother went to a hunt club in Alabama, which unfortunately was not handicapped accessible. Beck was unable to maneuver around the lodge, or even use the bathroom facilities. All the deer stands were elevated and the only way that he could get into one of them was for his brother to carry him up the ladder on his back. Beck was frustrated and gave up on hunting. He gave it one more try last year but met with the same frustrating results.

He finally decided that if he was ever going to hunt again, some changes had to be made, and he was going to make those changes happen. A local hunt club owner talked with Beck about opening his own club and after much prayer and encouragement from his friends, he decided to go for it. He hoped that his mission would be accomplished—to develop a hunt club where disabled individuals could hunt comfortably, safely and with 100% accessibility. Well, his dream became a reality, and *Mike Beck's Hidden Valley Whitetail Hunt Club* was created.

The club is located in Ehrhardt, SC, off of Bamberg's Highway 64 and features a totally accessible bathhouse complete with a roll-in shower for wheelchair users. He also has plenty of ground blinds built that are not only wheelchair accessible, but also seat two people in case the hunter needs assistance. These are also great for fathers and sons or husbands and wives who want to hunt together. Almost all of his elevated stands have room for two hunters and all of them are overlooking food plots and corn feeders. The club consists of over 1,000 acres with over 50 hunt stands.

For more information, visit the website at www.southcarolinawhitetails.com or call 727-819-9922.

NRCS Watershed Plan Promises to Ease Flooding Woes

Darlington County Council and NRCS recently sealed a deal which hopefully will lead to a reduction of flooding problems that have long affected the urban area south of the City of Darlington. NRCS first presented its plan in April of 2000, but due to concerns about obtaining easements and other land rights, approval of the plan was postponed. Then, in 2003, Darlington County Council voted to sign the agreement. Further investigation revealed that changes in wetland regulations would affect the plan. This altered the plan once again and delayed progress. The Project Agreement for the revised Watershed Plan - Environmental Assessment was signed by the sponsors on September 20, 2004.

The South Darlington Watershed Plan will cost about \$863,000 with NRCS providing about \$547,000 and Darlington County contributing approximately \$316,000. The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is expected to reimburse Darlington County for culvert alterations on SCDOT rights-of-way. Darlington County will provide just over \$5,000 annually for operation and maintenance to keep the project operating properly. Property owners have voted to tax themselves to pay for maintenance costs.

The goal is to reduce flooding damages along the six mile project through urban areas, a condition that has been all too common this past summer thanks to several tropical storm systems.

NRCS Planning Engineer Luke Nance says he is glad that the project work can finally be implemented. "I am sure that residents of the urban area south of the City of Darlington will be relieved when the project is completed and flooding problems are reduced."

The project is sponsored by Darlington County and the Darlington Soil and Water Conservation District.



NRCS State Conservationist Walter W. Douglas signs the South Darlington Watershed Plan.

Anderson County Parks Benefit from Bioengineering

By Amy O. Maxwell, USDA-NRCS, Public Affairs Specialist

Two parks in Anderson County now have a new look thanks to an energized partnership. Darwin Wright and Cater's Lake Parks were the locations of a recent shoreline stabilization demonstration project. The project was a joint effort of local, state, and federal agencies, and people in Anderson County are reaping the benefits. The project was coordinated by the Anderson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) along with Clemson University's Shoreline Restoration Research Project, with technical and financial assistance provided by the City of Anderson (Parks and Street Departments), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Foothills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council.

Last April, the Anderson SWCD and Dr. Larry Dyck, Clemson University Shoreline Restoration Research Project coordinator, approached the City of Anderson about installing bioengineering demonstrations around Darwin Wright and Cater's Lakes. The shoreline restoration project was initiated to help heal the scars of erosion which marred both of the lakes. Undercut banks created large ravines and unsightly erosion. Despite being an eyesore, the erosion was causing even bigger problems for water quality.

When soil around a lake or pond is not stabilized by plant roots or other materials, non-point source pollution is the result. This means that polluted water runs off into nearby streams and other water sources. The solution to this pollution is actually quite simple! Basically, the rule of thumb is that a naturally vegetated shoreline is crucial to a lake's health. Vegetation along these lakes acts as lungs and kidneys, filtering out harmful pollutants, protecting and beautifying the public parks, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat. Using bioengineering (a mixture of plants and other reinforcing materials), the shoreline around these water bodies was healed.

At Cater's Lake, 500 feet of shoreline was stabilized using recycled materials donated by the City of Anderson. The eroded shoreline was then stabilized with over 250 native plants and mulched with ground brush and tree limbs. Materials used at both projects included filter fabrics and native plants such as Switch grass. "The long roots of Switch grass are an excellent way of holding soil in place along a shoreline," explained Dyck. "There are many benefits of introducing natural materials into the shoreline, and it's more of a permanent solution as opposed to using manmade materials which need to be replaced."

At Darwin Wright Park, 250 feet of shoreline was rebuilt using soil brought in by the county. Switch grass was then plugged into filter fabric, and rocks were used to anchor

the plants. Foothills RC&D Council Chairman Wes Cooler said, "With the rapid growth of Anderson County, it's important that we remember the importance of maintaining and protecting open spaces like these parks, which are in the middle of the city." He said the demonstration projects will not only protect these areas and nearby water sources, but may also encourage homeowners around the lake to do the same. "I hope that homeowners who live along the shoreline will see this project and realize that they can also make a difference by stabilizing their own shoreline." Dave Demarest emphasized those thoughts by saying, "We are trying to show the general public the big picture in that it's important to protect soil and water resources and that it is everyone's responsibility to do their part."

Mike Banks, NRCS District Conservationist for Anderson County, recently welcomed project partners and others to an unveiling of the project sign at Darwin Wright Park. "This sign will hopefully educate park visitors and Anderson County residents about the project and help them realize the role that we all play in soil and water conservation." He also recognized the Anderson County Legislative Delegation for providing cost-share funds from the Water Recreation Fund to install the project.

For more information, or to find out how you can protect the shoreline, contact your local USDA Service Center, or call the Clemson University Shoreline Restoration Research Project at (864) 656-3583.



Switch grass plugged into filter fabric and secured with rocks stabilizes shoreline and prevents erosion.



Darwin Wright Park shoreline before (top) and after restoration.

Meet Our New Employees!

Derrick Lark is originally from Rock Hill, SC, but moved to the Greenville area after completing his BS in Biology from Francis Marion University in Florence, SC. He is expanding his capabilities by attending the Geomatics Technology (GIS/Surveying) program at Greenville Technical College. After spending some time in both the environmental consulting and manufacturing industries, Derrick is eager to learn as much as possible in his new position as a Soil Conservation Technician in the Laurens, SC field office. Welcome to NRCS Derrick!



Vickie Tatro was born in Vero Beach, Florida, and graduated from Vero Beach High School. She entered Civil Service in 1981, serving most of her career in South Carolina. She has two daughters (one living in Sumter and the other in Summerville, SC) and two grandsons—one is nine years old and the other one is 16 months old. Her hobbies include reading, watching movies, and spending time with her grandchildren. Vickie is a Financial Technician in the NRCS State Office. Welcome to NRCS Vickie!



Bobby McQueen is originally from Dillon, SC, but now lives in West Columbia, SC with his two sons, Wesley, 16, and Jacob, 12. He graduated from Lake View High School and joined the Air Force. He worked for the Air Force at Myrtle Beach until the base closed. While there, he joined the Myrtle Beach AFB aero and civil patrol where he received his private pilot's license. In 1992, he received an Associate Degree from Horry/Georgetown Technical College. Bobby is an Engineering Technician in the NRCS State office and says he is currently holding down three jobs: NRCS, Wesley and Jacob! Welcome to NRCS Bobby!



SC's *POWER* for Wildlife Program Offers Environmental Education Grants

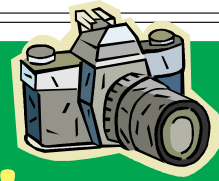
South Carolina's *POWER* (*Protecting Our Wildlife at Every Right of Way*) for Wildlife Youth Grant Program was created in 2004 to encourage and enhance natural resources education for our state's young adults. The *POWER* for Wildlife steering committee will award grants in the amounts of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 to promote, enhance, or assist with environmental education programs for youth. The first *POWER* for Wildlife Youth Grant will be awarded this year. Winners will be invited to attend the South Carolina Conservation Partnership Conference in Charleston, SC, January 5, 2005, for the award presentation. Please note: these grants are not for individual students.



Applications must be received by close of business December 15th, 2004. Original applications (no photocopies) should be mailed to Steve Edwards, Lowcountry RC&D, Colleton County Human Services Center, 219 South Lemacks Street, Walterboro, SC, 29488. You can receive an application by calling (843) 549-5596, or download the form at <http://scrcd.tripod.com/POWERgrant.pdf>

POWER for Wildlife offers landowners technical and financial assistance to create and maintain wildlife habitat beneath electrical transmission lines. The program is a statewide partnership effort administered by the SC RC&D (Resource Conservation and Development) Council and funded by electric power companies and electric cooperatives.

Conservation Photo Contest Winners!

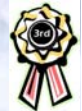


1st place

Lisa Good, District Conservationist, Laurens: Fall foliage in the Little River Watershed.



Wilfred Pace, District Conservationist, Bamberg/Barnwell: WRP site.



Emory Holsonback, Soil Scientist, Greenwood: Cow pasture, Spartanburg County.

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*Joe Cockrell, USFWS, Charleston, SC:
Fog at Hennigan Plantation, Beaufort.*

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*Dwayne Mangum, District Conservationist,
Charleston: Bone Orchard at Bulls Island.*

NRCS Employees Prepare for Retirement

Session explores retirement planning

A Pre-Retirement Seminar was held November 29-December 1, 2004, at the Dorn Veteran's Auditorium in Columbia, SC. The session was led by a representative from *Federal Benefit Solutions* and participants received an "Employee Retirement Calculation Workbook."

The training was divided up into different sections to target employees covered under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), as well as those covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

The session highlighted topics including annuities, survivor benefits, social security, Thrift Savings Plan, and flexible spending accounts.



SC NRCS employees received valuable information on planning for retirement.

SC NRCSer Interviewed for *History Channel* Show

American Revolution: Battle of Cowpens
December 17 at 9:00 pm

One of the American Revolution's most critical clashes, the Battle of Cowpens in South Carolina, was a signpost pointing directly to Yorktown, where the British surrendered in less than a year. On January 17, 1781, an American force led by a brilliant Revolutionary War commander, Daniel Morgan, routed a British army commanded by an imperious and greatly feared cavalry colonel, Banastre Tarleton. Due to his ruthless tactics, "Bloody Ban" was the most hated British officer in the South. But Morgan chose the battlefield and used the terrain to his advantage. The British arrived tired, cold, and hungry after marching for several days and nights to catch the rebels. In less than an hour, it was all over. Now, historians, soil scientists, tacticians, psychologists, geographers, and weapons experts analyze this crucial battle.

SC NRCS Resource Soil Scientist Dennis DeFrancesco (Greenville County) was interviewed for the *History Channel* show which will air later this month. He discussed how the soils may have affected the battle.